

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 661
By McMillan

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend the participants of the "Tennessee River 600", a six hundred mile personal watercraft tour of the Tennessee River benefiting the Children's Miracle Network.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should specially recognize those estimable citizens who give generously of their time and resources in order to make available the best possible care for ill children throughout the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the participants of the Tennessee River 600 are such admirable individuals who, by joining in this fundraising event, ensure that Tennessee's children's hospitals are among the best in the country; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee River 600, which began in 1997 as a pleasure event for water sports enthusiasts, has evolved into a major fundraiser for the Children's Miracle Network, an international nonprofit organization dedicated to raising funds for and awareness of children's hospitals; and

WHEREAS, funds from sponsors and donations by participants and other supporters of the event are divided equally between East Tennessee Children's Hospital in Knoxville, T.C. Thompson Children's Hospital in Chattanooga, the Children's Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, LeBonheur Children's Medical Center in Memphis, and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; over the past four years, more than \$65,000 has been donated to the Children's Miracle Network; and

WHEREAS, while the first Tennessee River 600 was the brainchild of Price Hopson, a Clarksville dentist, and his wife, Kay, the event is now organized and directed by Knoxville firefighter Dennis Beckley, assisted by Janice Fischer Yates of Nashville, a Capitol Hill lobbyist; and

WHEREAS, this personal watercraft tour of the mighty Tennessee River has attracted water enthusiasts from across the country; one rider travels over 2,000 miles in a motor home to enjoy the sights and scenes of Tennessee and the camaraderie that has developed over the past few years. This California RV'er has participated in all of the 600 events and usually transports several personal watercraft for backups when breakdowns occur; and

WHEREAS, participants pay a registration fee and are responsible for their food, lodging, and fuel; families and support crew travel by land and meet riders at overnight stops, events are planned for participants at each stop, and sightseeing is made a priority; and

WHEREAS, in past years, the tour has been fortunate to have doctors, Emergency Medical Technicians, dentists, mechanics, and other professionals riding the river to assist with health issues and watercraft failures that have occurred; and

WHEREAS, the event is publicized annually in *Watercraft World*, *PWC Magazine*, *International Jet Sport Boat Association*, *Pilot*, a Coast Guard publication, and state and local newspapers; and

WHEREAS, past participants who have completed the 600-mile trek include a dog and his master, a four-year-old boy accompanied by his dad, and an 82-year-old man from Alabama who prefers speed to cruising and is the first to arrive at every stop; and

WHEREAS, last year, University of Tennessee Head Football Coach Phillip Fulmer was the event's Grand Marshal and rode several miles with the participants; and

WHEREAS, this year's 7th Annual Tennessee River 600 starts in Knoxville on Saturday, July 26, 2003, and will end at Paris Landing State Park on August 2, 2003; and

WHEREAS, the first and longest leg of the trip is a grueling 180 miles and will take approximately eight hours from Knoxville to Chattanooga; upon arrival, riders will dock and be bused to the Chattanooga Choo Choo for a two-night stay; and

WHEREAS, participants will journey on down the river, stopping at Covenant Cove and Joe Wheeler State Park in Alabama and Pickwick Landing State Park before reaching their final destination; and

WHEREAS, directed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, participants will lock through eight Tennessee Valley Authority dams during the Tennessee River ride: Fort Loudon, Watts Bar, Chickamauga, Nickajack, Guntersville in Alabama, Joe Wheeler in Alabama, Wilson in Alabama, and Pickwick; and

WHEREAS, additional support services are provided by Tennessee State Parks, the Tennessee Department of Tourism, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the U.S. Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary, Team Hardin County, the Corrections Corporation of America, and the Alabama Water Police. Tour events are sponsored by Chattanooga supporters, Team Hardin County for Tourism, the Hardin County Good Ole Boys, the Corrections Corporation of America, Clifton City officials, Wayne County officials, the Birdsong Resort, and the Paris/Henry County Chamber of Commerce; and

WHEREAS, riders are to be commended for their dedication to the plight of sick children and their families, as riders have endured the many trials of river travel, including storms with

waves six feet high, the baking hot sun, long waits to lock through dams, lost luggage and room reservations, watercraft engine failures, sinking vessels; and many other problems; and

WHEREAS, however, as participants are aware that the trials they face on the river cannot even compare with the tragedies daily encountered by the families of suffering children, the offer of immersion in the beautiful scenery that our forefathers once beheld, the thrill of the ride, and the promise of experiencing Tennessee's true Southern hospitality provide inspiration to endure the river's rage in order to help sick children; and

WHEREAS, the members of this Legislative Body find it appropriate to pause in their deliberations to acknowledge and applaud these great citizens for their remarkable contributions to the welfare of the State of Tennessee and its children; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend the participants and supporters of the Tennessee River 600, fondly noting their stalwart commitment to this noble cause and extending to them our best wishes for their continued success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.